

Crossing Cultures: Monumental Miniatures

BAND 1

# KLEINPLASTIK

NOWES | FERNANDEZ | ZEMANEK



Art for Eternity  
303 East 81st Street  
New York, NY 10028. USA



# KLEINPLASTIK

Crossing Cultures: Monumental Miniatures

*May 28 – June 1*  
*NEW YORK 2025*

MIT 64 ABBILDUNGEN

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# ANMERKUNGEN ZUR METHODE

Curating an exhibition dedicated to small-scale sculpture is both a joyful endeavor and a curatorial challenge. In many non-European societies, such sculptures are not simply decorative objects. They serve vital roles within personal, spiritual, and ritual contexts. Often, these works are known only within private domains or are brought into the public sphere during highly specific ceremonial moments.

In the following pages, we invite you to join us in exploring the masterful world of monumental miniatures. These small works reveal extraordinary technical skill and refined craftsmanship. To create something perfect and unique at this scale demands exceptional talent, keen focus, and an intimate knowledge of detail and ornament. Small sculpture allows for no mistakes. A single misplaced cut can ruin the entire composition. Only true masters of the medium can sense the essence within the material and transform it into something eternal, something monumental in spirit.

The pleasure these works offer the viewer is not accidental. It is consciously intended by the artist. Through their density of form and meaning, these sculptures stimulate our intellect and imagination. The closer we examine them, the more we are drawn into a sense of reverence. We begin to feel the artist's presence and the animation of the work itself. These sculptures are imbued with a sense of soul and presence.

In the exhibition "Crossing Cultures: Monumental Miniatures - Kleinplastik," we seek to reframe the significance of small-scale sculpture in our own time. We present these works as vibrant sources of energy and as visions of beauty and perfection. These are not miniature versions of larger pieces. Rather, they are autonomous in function and meaning, often created as personal objects. Through their use and offering, many have acquired a rich patina that speaks of devotion and time. As collectors, we value this surface history as a sign of life and transformation. It is through this depth of wear that these objects reveal their stories, their magic, and the sense of soul we seek in a world increasingly shaped by the technical, the interchangeable, and the endlessly reproducible.

In recent decades, several important exhibitions have explored the world of small-scale sculpture. Pioneering efforts by William Fagg in 1970 and David Attenborough in 1985 honored the collection of miniature sculptures amassed by artist Josef Herman, resulting in two influential volumes. A significant contribution to the appreciation of small-scale sculpture also came through Dave DeRoche's insightful essay *Monumental Miniatures: The Saul and Marsha Stanoff Collection* (2003), which further underscored the profound expressive power and cultural richness embodied in these compact forms.



Another key moment in elevating the status of small sculpture came with the exhibition “Gems,” curated by Spanish gallerist Antonio Casanova. His presentation rightfully placed these objects on the level of treasures and precious adornments. When “Gems” debuted at the Paris *Parcours des mondes* in 2009, it was celebrated as a landmark event, helping miniature works gain long-overdue recognition equal to that of their larger counterparts.

Unique works serve as ambassadors of the unfamiliar. They are not art in the Western sense, but instead open a doorway into a new world and into the realm of ideas of the people who created them. We are pleased to welcome you on a journey of renewed perception. Allow yourself to be curious and open to what you are about to discover.

Dr. David Zemanek







# Faience Ushabti for the Overseer of the Antechamber HOR-IR-AA

Howard  
Nowes

Unattributed Artist  
Egypt  
26th dynasty circa 610 to 560 BCE  
Faience composition  
H: 18.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Provenance: Old Collection, Berlin  
acquired 26 February 1963 from M. Gassierer

# Miniature Eye Idol TELL BRAK

Howard  
Nowes

Unattributed Artist  
Mesopotamia Tek Brak Idol  
Circa 3500-3000 BCE  
Serpentine  
H: 4.12 cm

PROVENANCE  
Brooklyn NY Collection









## The Illustriousness of Gold

Across the ancient world, miniature art objects—whether idols, funerary figurines, or intricate gold works—reveal a remarkable story of shared human creativity and symbolic expression. Despite vast distances and cultural differences, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and South America each produced small-scale masterpieces that speak to common themes of spirituality, identity, and power.

The Egyptian ushabti, for example, served as a funerary figurine placed in tombs to act as a servant for the deceased in the afterlife. Crafted in large numbers and often inscribed

with the owner's name, these magical figures embodied the Egyptian belief in an active, service-filled afterlife and the importance of preparation for eternity. In Mesopotamia, miniature idols and cylinder seals—often depicting deities, animals, or mythological scenes—played key roles in religious rituals and daily life. These objects, sometimes just a few centimeters tall, were both personal and sacred, used for protection, commemoration, or as offerings to the gods.

Goldwork provides another compelling link. Both the Sumerians of Mesopotamia and



the ancient Egyptians mastered Goldsmithing, creating jewelry, decorative objects, and ritual items that signified wealth, divine favor, and royal authority.

Across the Atlantic, ancient cultures in the Andes and Mesoamerica also developed sophisticated gold-working traditions, producing miniature figures and ornaments that reflected their own cosmologies and social hierarchies. The oldest gold artifacts from the Americas, found in Peru, date back over 4,000 years and demonstrate a parallel reverence for the material and its symbolic power.

These miniature works, whether an idol from Mesopotamia, an Egyptian ushabti, or a gold figurine from South America, highlight both the diversity and the universality of ancient artistic

expression. They show how small-scale art could serve as a bridge between the earthly and the divine, the personal and the communal, and, ultimately, between cultures themselves. Exchanges between Egypt and Mesopotamia are well-documented, with artistic motifs and techniques crossing borders and inspiring new forms. Meanwhile, the independent yet analogous development of miniature art in the Americas underscores the shared human impulse to create objects of meaning and beauty, no matter the continent.

By bringing together these miniature masterpieces, we not only celebrate the ingenuity of ancient artists but also invite viewers to reflect on the enduring connections that unite cultures across time and space.

Howard M. Nowes



# Co-Joined Shamans VERAGUAS

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Unattributed Veraguas Artist

Panama

Circa 500 - 1500 AD

Gold

18k Weight 112g

H: 7.2 cm W: 9.5 cm

## PROVENANCE

The estate of Christian Illies (1947-2014)

Opelika, Alabama









## Figural Divinity VERAGUAS

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Unattributed Veraguas Artist

Panama

Circa 500 - 1520 AD

Gold

22k Weight 148g

H: 11 cm W: 7 cm

### PROVENANCE

The estate of Christian Illies (1947-2014)

Opelika, Alabama

# Shaman in Transformation

## CHIRIQUI

---

Unattributed Chiriqui Artist

Panama

Circa 500 - 1520 AD

Gold

14k Weight 62g

H: 8.4 cm W: 7cm

### PROVENANCE

The estate of Christian Illies (1947-2014)

Opelika, Alabama











# Zoomorphic Transformation Figure TOLIMA

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Unattributed Tolima Artist  
Colombia  
Circa 500 - 1000 AD  
Gold  
21k Weight 99g  
H: 8.9 cm

PROVENANCE  
Jack Hart, Poway, USA

PUBLICATION  
Capturing The Sun  
Master Craftsmen of Ancient Mesoamerica,  
Gallery exhibition October 2017



# Figural Talisman

## PUTCHU GUINADJI

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Unattributed Kotoko Artist  
Chad  
Metal  
H: 6.3 cm

PROVENANCE  
Philip Gould, New York, USA









## Art of Metal

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I have been a dealer in African art for more years than I care to admit. For most of my career, I focused my attention on classical wooden forms, like the masks and statues we all know so well.

Several years ago, while visiting a colleague, I picked up a metal snake charm from the Joseph Knopfmacher collection. I was suddenly struck by the beauty and sophistication of the casting. My eyes were opened to a whole new world. I questioned why I had never taken the time to look closely at African metals before.

It is a terrible thing when we cease to truly see, either the art we sell or the world we live in. I purchased the snake, took it home and lived with it. As all good works of art, its elegance and power only grew with time. All dealers are collectors at heart, and I had fallen in love again.

Sebastian Fernandez

# Protective Charm in the Shape of a Snake



Unattributed Gan Artist  
Southern Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 13.3 cm

PROVENANCE  
Joseph Knopfelmacher, New York, USA





## Figural Pendant

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Unattributed Senufo or Toussian/Tusian Artist  
Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Jean-Paul Chazal Collection, Paris, France









## Figural Pendant

---

Unattributed Senufo or Toussian/Tusian Artist  
Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 6.9 cm

PROVENANCE  
Wilfried Glar Collection, Eschweiler, Germany

# Miniature Leopard Figure OSEBO

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Unattributed Akan Artist  
Ghana  
Metal  
H: 12 cm

PROVENANCE  
European Private Collection





# Miniature Mask

## MA GO

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Unattributed Bassa Artist

Liberia

Wood

H: 8.9 cm

### PROVENANCE

Dr. Saul Tuttmann & Dr. Gregory W. Siskind

New York, USA









# Protective Charm in the Shape of a Snake



Unattributed Gan Artist  
Southern Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 12.7 cm

PROVENANCE  
Joseph Knopfelmacher, New York, USA

## Pair of Figures Protective Charm

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Unattributed Kulango Artist  
Côte d'Ivoire  
Metal  
H: 5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Wilfried Glar Collection, Eschweiler, Germany







## Miniature Animal Figure

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Early Voltaic Artist  
Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 7.6 cm

PROVENANCE  
Joseph Knopfelmacher, New York, USA

# Ring

## PUTCHU GUINADJI

---

Unattributed Kotoko Artist

Chad

Metal

H: 6.9 cm

### PROVENANCE

Private Collection, New York, USA





# Zoomorphic Pendant

---

Unattributed Toussian/Tusian Artist  
Burkina Faso  
Metal  
H: 11.4 cm

PROVENANCE  
Thomas G.B. Wheelock,  
New York, USA

PUBLICATION  
Roy/Wheelock, 2007:  
“Land of the Flying Masks,” figure 350





# Friction Oracle KAKUKA

---

Unattributed Dinga Artist  
D. R. Congo / Angola  
Wood  
H: 10 cm

## PROVENANCE

Robert Wilson, New York, USA  
Bruce Frank, New York, USA  
Dave DeRoche, San Francisco, USA







## Pair of Ancestor Figures

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Unattributed Dogon Artist

Mali

Wood

H: 11.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

René David, Zurich, Switzerland

Harald & Ursula Suhr Collection,

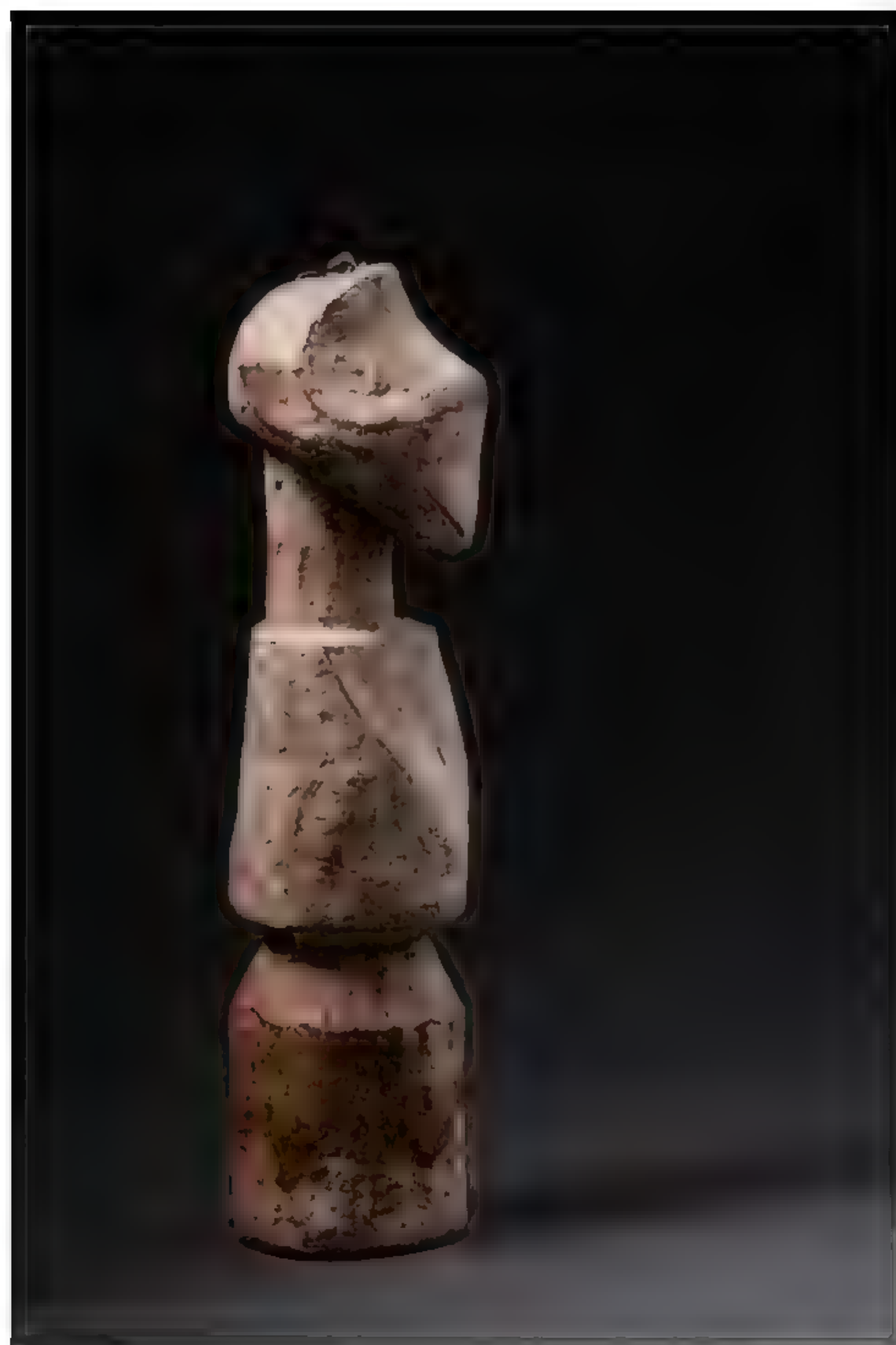
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (1986)

### PUBLICATION

Galerie Fernandez Leventhal:

LIMOUSIN SCULPTEUR - Rencontres Africaines,

Paris 2015



## Miniature Power Figure NKISI

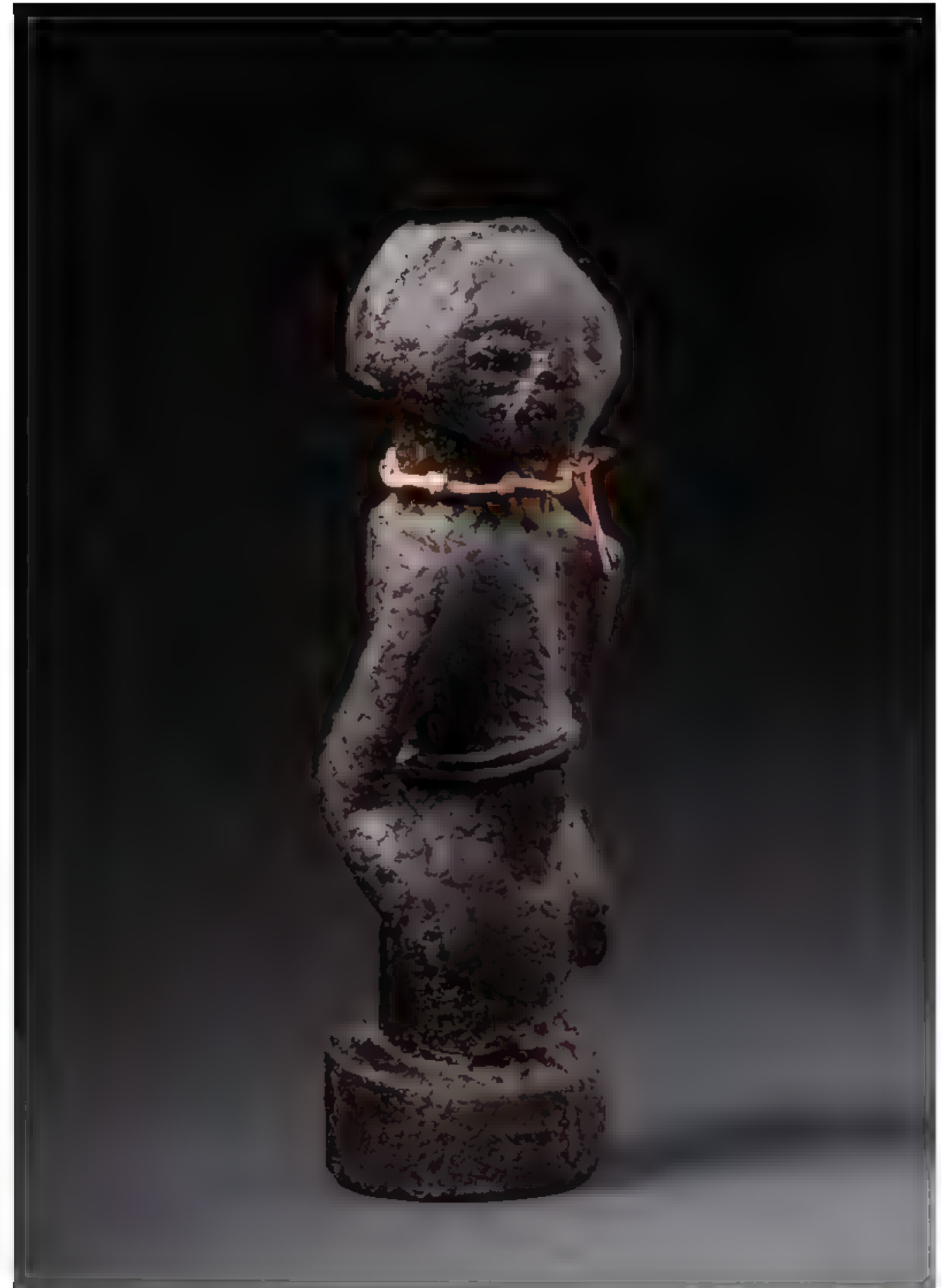
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Unattributed Songye Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 12.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Scandinavian Collection, before 1940







## Miniature Power Figure NKISI

---

Unattributed Songye /Kusu Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 11.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Scandinavian Collection, before 1940



## MU PO - Power Figures from Cameroon

The so-called “mu po” (power figures), which rarely exceed 30 centimeters in height, have different ways of being used. Before we go on to their implementation, we will first look at the existing canon. We find small sculptures with different iconography. Here it is worth mentioning the various arm gestures: some figures have their hands next to the body, their shoulders angled or their hands placed on their chin. The gesture of the angled arms can be interpreted as a gesture of conquering evil spirits, and the hands touching the chin can be interpreted as a gesture of reflection and dignity. The large round belly can be interpreted as pregnancy or as a disease, whereby the disease could be interpreted as a punishment, in the context of the kun’gan society as dropsy.

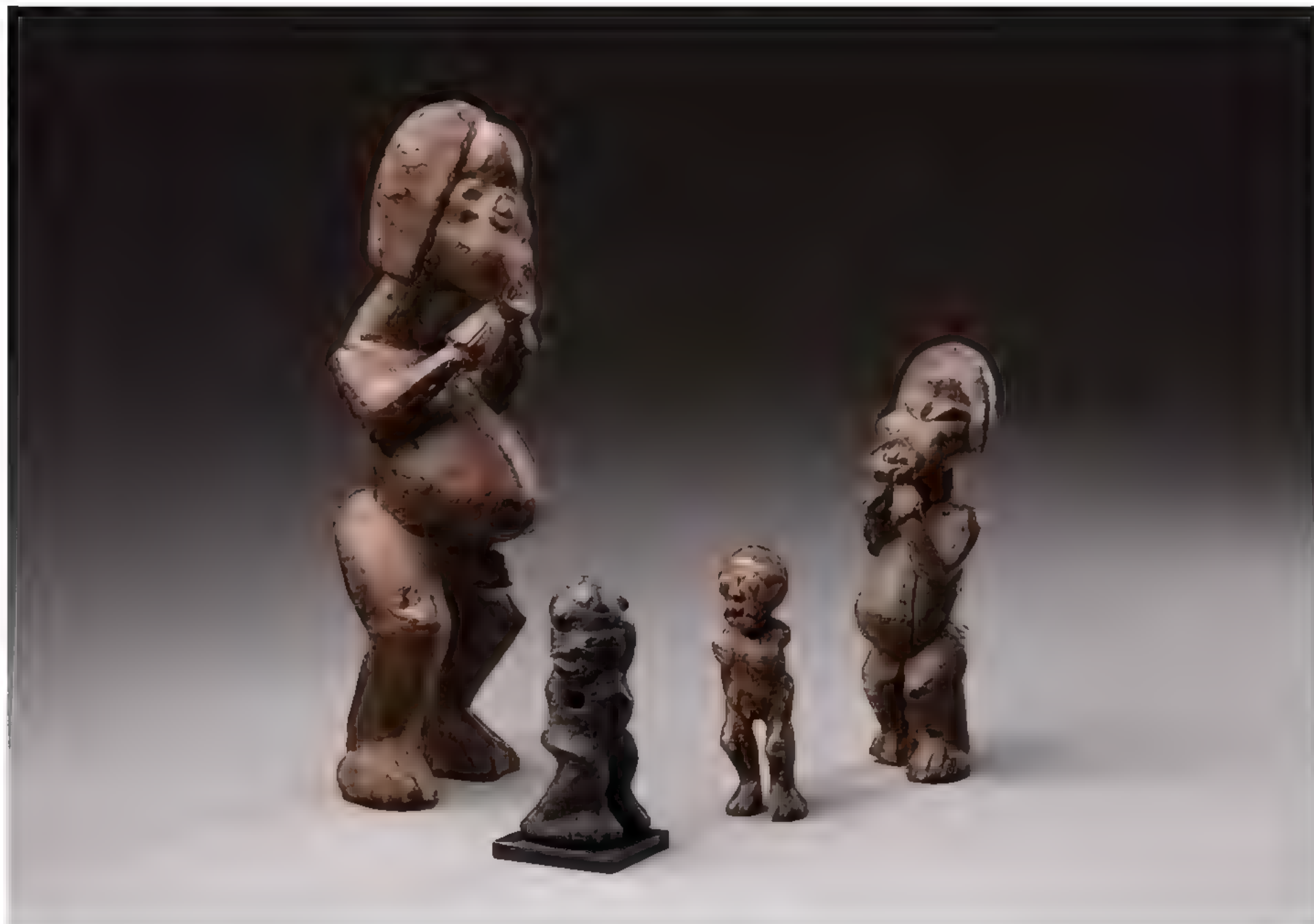
There are different interpretations in the literature regarding the function of the sculptures. The most common interpretation is that the figures are the tools of a diviner who is able to impart past and future knowledge. The figures are rubbed with medicine and pastes by ritual experts to magically recharge them. Some of the objects have a cavity on the side of the body, back, neck or head that were filled with magic substances and medicines. These body openings were closed with cloth, a strip of leather or a piece of wood to ensure their effectiveness. In particular, these magically charged figures then served to protect the bearers and dancers of the kun’gan society and to ward off strangers. Also in the context of healing, such “power figures” were used by ritualists.

The figures are representative of the healers’ patients, while the patients are treated at a distance. In the context of fertility, the “pregnant” figures are often rooted in the area and thus embody the fertility of the ethnic group and the



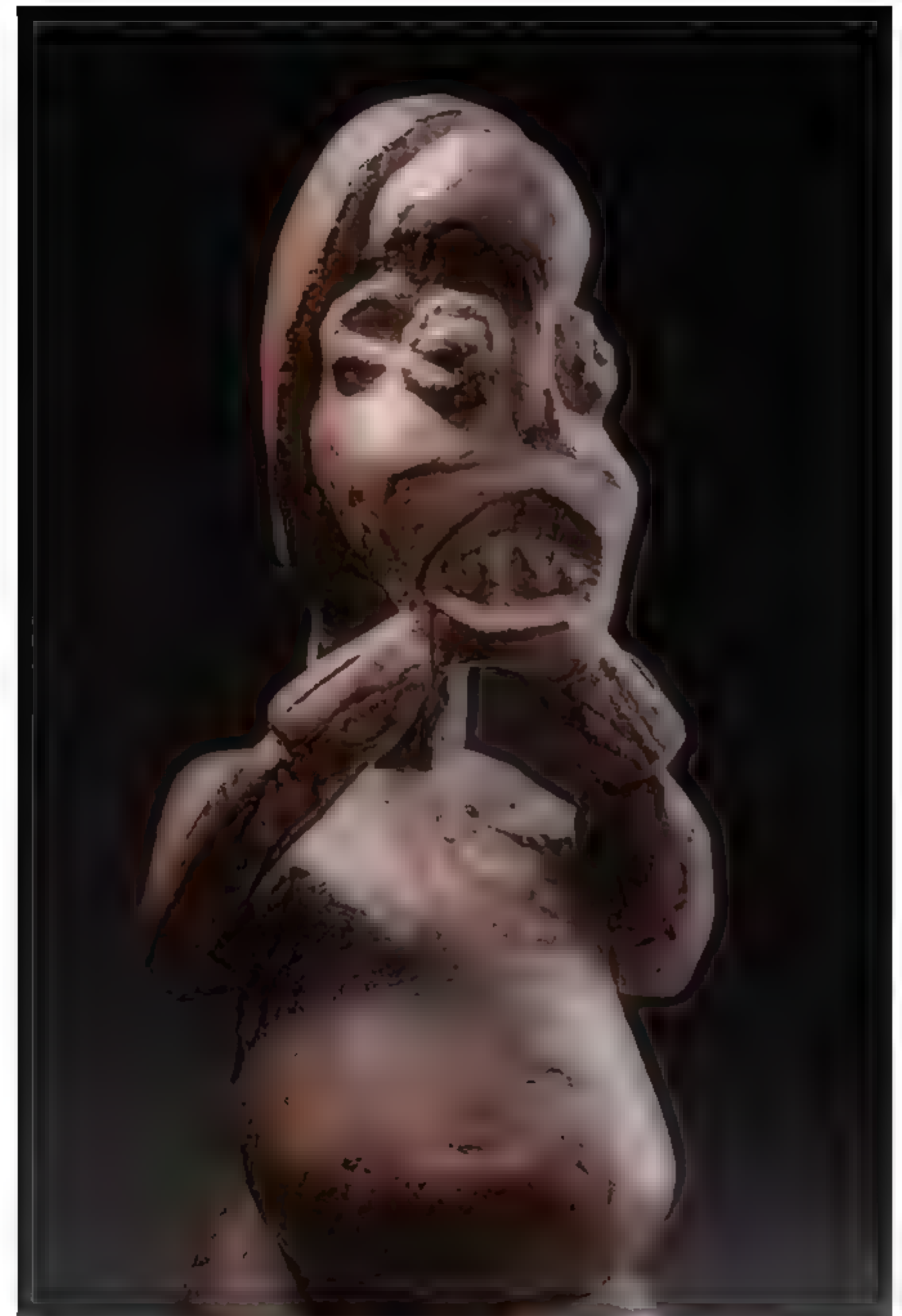
country to which the kingdom belongs. They should protect pregnant women to ensure a successful birth. In addition to this interpretation we also find that the figures are placed on fields to guarantee the fertility of the land. The often crusty surfaces indicate sacrifices and long-term ritual handling of the objects. The patina is carefully consecrated by treatments made by the ritual specialist. Gebauer describes that even in the 1930s the elders regarded these objects with respect, but for the younger generation their meaning was gradually lost. Gebauer also found these figures at the kings' courts, with ritual specialists, and among the local people. Thus, these sculptures were not only reserved for a certain elite but were part of the local knowledge.

Dr. David Zemanek









## Figure MU PO

Art. David  
Clement

Unattributed Bamileke Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 28.5 cm

### PROVENANCE

Clement Egerton, collected in situ in 1938 [Neighbour-  
hood of Bangangte]  
Property of Mrs. Morris-Adams, daughter of Colonel  
F.C.C.Egerton, 1979  
Christie's, London, 16 October 1979. Lot 104  
Cole Harrell, New York, USA



# Power Figure MU PO

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Unattributed Bamileke Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 18.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
French Colonial Collection







# Figure MU PO

Unattributed Bamileke Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 11.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Kim Redlich, Düsseldorf, Germany





## Figure MU PO

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Unattributed Bamileke/Bangwa Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 10.4 cm

### PROVENANCE

Pierre Harter (1928-1991), Paris, France  
Galerie Alain Bovis, Paris, France (2016)  
Belgian Private Collection  
Bruno Claessens Antwerp, Belgium

### PUBLICATION

Beautysmall - À chacun ses petites  
merveilles, Alain Bovis, Paris 2016

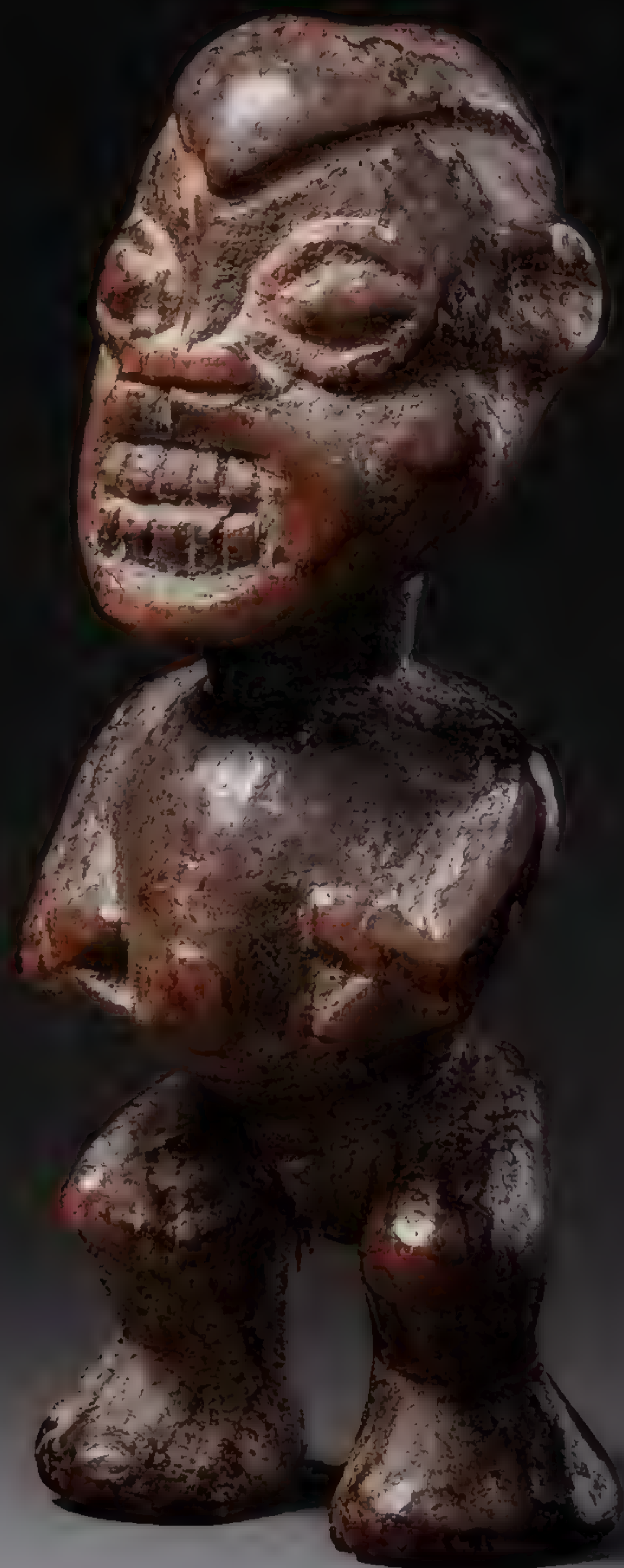


# Figure MU PO



Unattributed Bamileke Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 11 cm

PROVENANCE  
French Colonial Collection









## Pair of Figures MU PO

Art David  
Clemens

Unattributed Bamileke-Batie Artist  
Cameroon  
Wood  
H: 15.5cm

PROVENANCE  
Collected in situ by Richard Hopp  
(b.1880) in Cameroon (1914)









## Carved Wooden Stopper MTETE

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Unattributed Makonde Artist  
Mozambique  
Wood  
H: 7.8 cm

PROVENANCE  
Portugese Private Collection, Lisabon









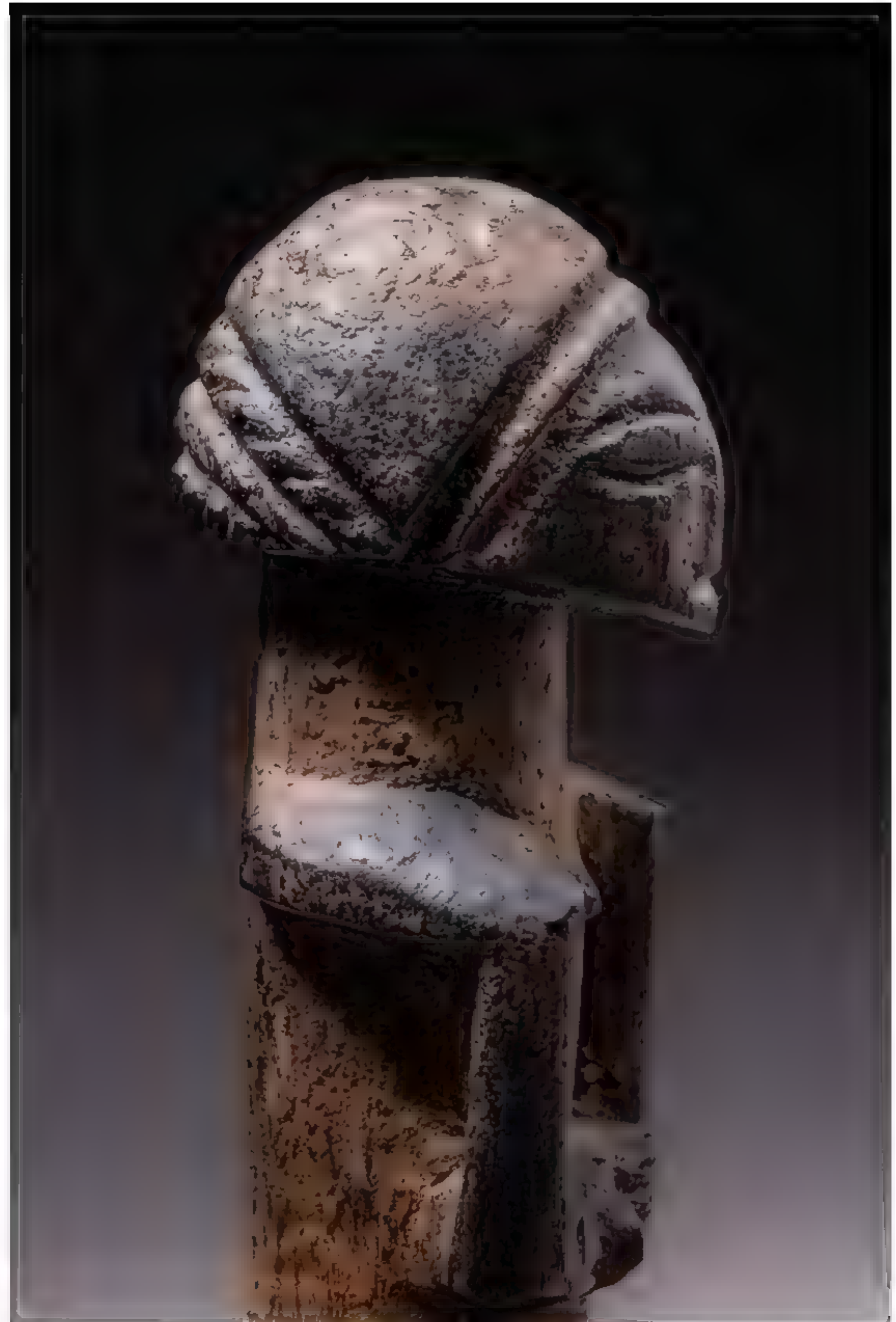


## Ancestor Figure

Gr. David J. D.  
Clemans

Unattributed Dogon Artist  
Mali  
Wood  
H: 18 cm

PROVENANCE  
Jan Schneider, Buchbach, Germany



## Figure KAKUDJI

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Unattributed Luba-Hemba Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Kasongo Territory, Maniema  
Wood  
H: 12 cm

PROVENANCE  
Marc Felix, Brussels, Belgium  
Galerie Fred Jahn, Munich, Germany  
Thomas Olbricht, Essen, Germany (1996)





## Figure BATEBA



Unattributed Lobi Artist  
Burkina Faso  
Wood  
H: 10.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Scandinavian Private Collection, aquired  
in the 1960´s in Paris  
Jyrki Lammi, Helsinki, Finland







# PINGU IWA BWIMPE

Unattributed Luluwa Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 22.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
American Private Collection



## Power Figure PHUUNGU

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Unattributed Yaka Artist

D. R. Congo

Wood

H: 17.4 cm

### PROVENANCE

Henricus und Nina Simonis, Dusseldorf, Germany

Petr Zubek, Dusseldorf, Germany

### PUBLICATION

Simonis (2019): Yaka power figures,  
p. 122,123





Gebied :	<i>Rasai:</i>
Région :	<i>Territ : Duluwa</i>
Stam :	<i>Luluwa</i>
Tribu :	
Localité :	<i>Groupement : Batohesi</i>
Période :	<i>Village : Daye Balau</i>
Toestand :	<i>Bonne</i>
Condition :	
Behandeling :	-
Traitement :	
Identificatie door :	<i>T. G.</i>
Identifié par :	
Afmetingen :	
Dimensions :	
	Hoogte/Lengte : <i>117</i> <i>cm</i>
	Hauteur/Longueur : <i>117</i> <i>cm</i>
	Breedte/Diam. : <i>1</i>
	Larg./Diam. :

# Figure

## LUPINGU IWA BWIMPE

Unattributed Luluwa Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 11.7 cm

PROVENANCE  
German Private Collection

Listed in the Timmermans Files T149





## Miniature Power Figure NKISI

---

Unattributed Kongo-Sundi Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 9 cm

PROVENANCE  
Rob Vervoort, Molenstede-Diest, Belgium  
Scott Bergmans, Lommel, Belgium









## Figure LUPINGU IWA BWIMPE

Unattributed Luluwa Artist

D. R. Congo

Wood

H: 22 cm

### PROVENANCE

Hans Himmelheber, Heidelberg, collected in situ 1955

Lore Kegel, Hamburg, Germany

Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany

Kegel-Konietzko & Dorn, Hamburg, Germany

### PUBLICATION

Schädler, 1992: Gods Spirits Ancestors, African sculpture  
from private German collections, p. 201, no.163





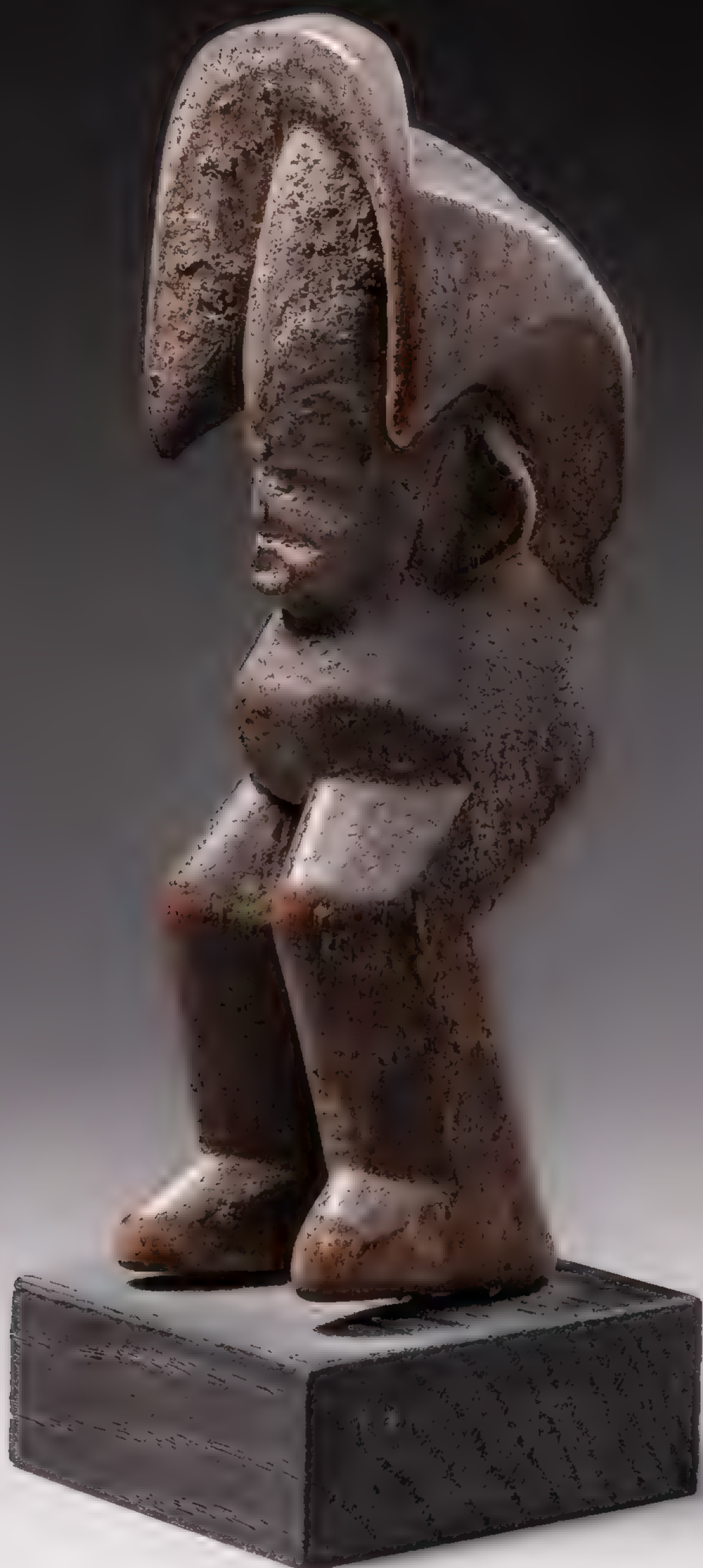
## Divination Figure AGWUSHI - IKENGA

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Unattributed Igbo Artist  
Nigeria  
Wood  
H: 11 cm

### PROVENANCE

Lore Kegel, Hamburg, Germany, collected in situ 1956  
Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany  
Kegel-Konietzko & Dorn, Hamburg, Germany





## Whistle KASENGOSENKO

---

Unattributed Chokwe Artist  
Angola  
Wood  
H: 9 cm

### PROVENANCE

Lore Kegel, Hamburg, Germany, collected in situ 1956  
Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany  
Kegel-Konietzko & Dorn, Hamburg, Germany





# Maternity

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On Line  
2000

Unattributed Dan Artist  
Liberia  
Copper alloy  
H: 15.4 cm

PROVENANCE  
British colonial Collection







## Miniature Drum MUKUPEL

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Unattributed Chokwe Artist  
Angola  
Wood  
H: 5.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Scott Bergmans, Lommel, Belgium



## Ritual Figure MUKUYA

Unattributed Bembe Artist  
Republic of the Congo (Congo Brazzaville)  
Central Southern Congo-Brazzaville,  
Upper Bouenza Basin  
Wood  
H: 13 cm

### PROVENANCE

Hamburg Private Collection  
Lore Kegel, Hamburg, Germany (1947)  
Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany  
Kegel-Konietzko & Dorn, Hamburg, Germany

### PUBLICATION

Himmelheber, 1960: Negerkunst und Negerkünstler,  
p. 317, #250





# Power Figure NKISHI

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Unattributed Songye Artist  
D. R. Congo  
Wood  
H: 13.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Kellim Brown, Brussels, Belgium





# Miniature Power Figure NKISI

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Unattributed Songye Artist  
D. R. Congo, Lomami Basin and Province  
Wood  
H: 11.5 cm

PROVENANCE  
Peter Willborg, Stockholm, Sweden



# Figural Amulet MUSWINGA

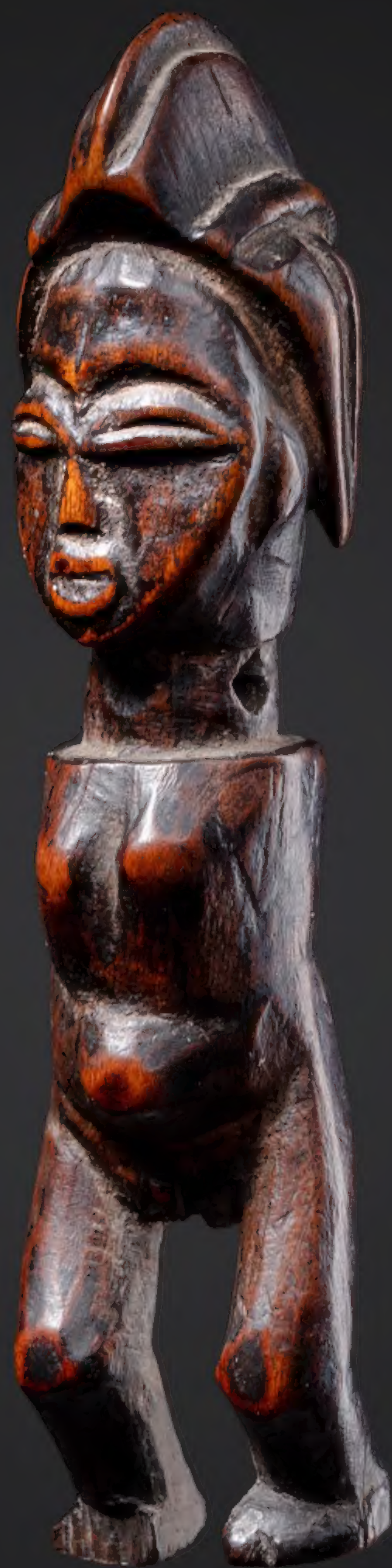
Dr. David  
Zemanek

---

Unattributed Punu Artist  
Gabon  
Wood  
H: 10 cm

PROVENANCE  
Hamburg Private Collection  
Lore Kegel, Hamburg, Germany (1947)  
Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg, Germany  
Kegel-Konietzko & Dorn, Hamburg, Germany









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Petr Zubek

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Sebastian Fernandez  
pages 21-43  
Rebekka Dengel  
pages 45-63; 66-76; 82-101  
Petr Zubek  
pages 64; 65; 78; 79  
Andreas Achmann  
pages 80; 81

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